

Croatia

{kroh-ay'-shuh}

Croatia, formerly one of the republics of YUGOSLAVIA, became independent in 1991. The country is shaped like an inverted V, with one arm (DALMATIA) extending from ISTRIA south along the coast of the Adriatic Sea, and the other (Croatia proper and SLAVONIA) extending inland eastward as far as the Serbian border. In between the two arms is the former Yugoslavian republic of Bosnia and Hercegovina. Croatia is bounded on the north by Slovenia and Hungary. Its capital is ZAGREB. In 1994 about one-quarter of the country was controlled by ethnic Serbs in rebellion against the Croatian government (see YUGOSLAV WAR).

For most of its history Croatia was part of the kingdom of Hungary; with the breakup of that kingdom in 1918, it was incorporated into the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, which became Yugoslavia in 1929.

LAND AND PEOPLE

Topographically Croatia comprises two main regions: the karst mountains of Dalmatia (the DINARIC ALPS) and the Pannonian plain, which includes most of Slavonia and Croatia proper. The Zagorie district north of Zagreb is characterized by rolling hills. The territory of Dalmatia includes many off-shore islands. A mild Mediterranean climate prevails along the coast, and a more extreme continental climate in the interior. The main rivers are the Drava, which forms part of the border with Hungary, the SAVA on the border with Bosnia, and the DANUBE, on the border with Serbia. The Drava and Sava are both tributaries of the Danube. All three are navigable and have considerable commercial traffic. Croatia's main agricultural region is the Pannonian plain.

The Croatian people, who comprise about three-quarters of the population, are mostly Roman Catholic in religion. The second-largest group (12 percent) is the closely-related Eastern orthodox Serbs, many of whom live in the Krajina region along the Bosnian border. The population includes smaller numbers of ethnic Slovenes, Italians, and Hungarians. Italian cultural influence was historically strong in Dalmatia; Austro-Hungarian culture was the major influence in the interior.

The Croats and Serbs both speak Serbo-Croatian, though the Croats use the Latin alphabet and the Serbs use the Cyrillic. The traditional hostility between these two peoples erupted into violence when Croatia declared its independence in June 1991.

ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

Croatia had one of Yugoslavia's most developed economies. Many Croats felt that the Yugoslav government was making them pay disproportionately to aid the poorer republics, which provided one of the motives for the secessionist movement. Agriculture is characterized by small privately-owned farms. Slavonia is the richest agricultural area, although Dalmatia is known for its wines. Before the Croatian economy was disrupted by the 1991 war, lumber, textiles, and petroleum production were major industries. Tourism was also an important source of revenue, especially for DUBROVNIK and other seaside resorts on the Dalmatian coast. In addition to Zagreb and Dubrovnik, major cities include SPLIT, RIJEKA, and PULA.

HISTORY AND GOVERNMENT

A Croatian kingdom was founded in 925 and maintained its independence until the beginning of the 12th century, when it was united with Hungary. Slavonia was under Ottoman rule during the 16th and 17th centuries. During this period the Habsburg rulers of Hungary established a military zone along the border with Turkey and settled German, Serbian, and Hungarian colonists in Croatia. In the 19th century, the Croats resisted Hungarian attempts to make them adopt Magyar language and culture. Led by Josip Jelacic, they sided with Austria during the Austro-Hungarian war of 1848-49. Croatia was granted self-government in 1868, but remained dissatisfied under Hungarian rule. Croatian political leaders in the late 19th century included Bishop Joseph Strossmayer, who favored Yugoslav unity, and Ante Starcevic, who preached Croatian separatism.

With the downfall of Austria-Hungary in 1918, the Croats joined the Serbs and Slovenes to form Yugoslavia. The appeal of separatism remained strong, however, and when the Germans invaded Yugoslavia in 1941 they created a Croatian client-state headed by Ante Pavelic, leader of the Ustase, a Croatian fascist group. The Pavelic regime was notorious for its wartime atrocities against Serbs and Jews. In 1945 Yugoslavia was reunited under the leadership of Josip Broz (TITO), a Croatian Communist leader who had fought the Germans and fascists during

the occupation.

After Tito's death in 1980, the Yugoslav federation began to weaken, a process that culminated with the defection of Croatia and Slovenia in 1991. Croatia's Serbian community opposed the independence movement and, supported by Yugoslav troops, took up arms against the Croatian nationalist government of Franjo Tudjman. A UN-sponsored truce early in 1992 left the Serbs in control of the Krajina and other areas of the republic. Sporadic fighting continued, and in June 1993 the rebel Serbs voted in favor of political union with the Serbs of neighboring Bosnia. Early in 1994, initiatives were taken to build cooperation between Croatia and Bosnia, initially by a federation of territories held by Muslims in Bosnia and the Croatian minority in Bosnia. This was followed by a pact of confederation between Croatia and Bosnia, signed on March 18 by the Bosnian president, Alija IZETBEGOVIC, and the Croatian president, Franjo TUDJMAN. Serbs in general denounced the pact of cooperation as dangerous to their own interests.

Bibliography: Allcock, John, et al., eds., *Yugoslavia in Transition* (1991); Dragnich, Alex N., *Serbs and Croats: The Struggle in Yugoslavia* (1992); Eterovich, Francis H., and Spalatin, Christopher, eds., *Croatia: Land, People, and Culture* (1970); Glenny, Misha, *The Fall of Yugoslavia: The Third Balkan War* (1992); Guldescu, S., *The Croatian-Slavonian Kingdom, 1526-1792* (1970); McAdams, C. M., *Croatia: Myth and Reality* (1992); Prpic, George J., *Croatia and the Croats: An Annotated Bibliography* (1982); Thompson, Mark, *A Paper House: The Ending of Yugoslavia* (1993).

